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The second Paper read was—

2. *Sketches of the Hilly Dagistán, with Lesghi Tribes of the Eastern Chain of the Caucasus.* By BARON DE BODE.

Communicated by DR. THOMAS HODGKIN, M.D., F.R.G.S.

DAGISTÁN is probably less known than the remainder of the Caucasian chain west of the Caspian. That part of the Caucasus is split up into hill and dale, with offshoots from the principal snowy range; but Dagistán is formed of stupendous barren granitic masses, that form a high table-land, intersected by rapid streams. There are no roads in the country, nor do the foot-paths of the inhabitants serve, without difficulty, for beasts of burden. The small amount of cultivated ground that exists in Dagistán consists of small terraced gardens, high on the hill sides, often at points very difficult of access.

The ethnography of the Caucasus is exceedingly complicated, owing chiefly to its having been a thoroughfare to the hordes of Central Asia, and to the encroachments of surrounding races. Baron de Bode's paper is largely occupied with a discussion on the origin of the Lesghi of Dagistán, who were under the sway of Schamyl, who are totally distinct from the Cherkesses (Circassians), and are geographically separated from them by the military road that joins Tiflis with Russia.

The CHAIRMAN said the Society were exceedingly indebted to Baron de Bode for the account he had given of the interior of a country with which we were so little acquainted. The contrast which he had drawn between the Tcherkess, or Circassians, and the Lesghi of Dagistán was very striking. This was not, however, the first time the Society had been indebted to Baron de Bode. Many years ago he contributed a valuable paper on a portion of Persia to the south of the great Caucasian chain, the north-eastern parts of which he had described on the present occasion. Baron de Bode was so thoroughly acquainted with the habits of the people, and their language, that it was of great value to receive from him so vivid a description as they had just listened to. They had present an experienced English geographer, General Monteith, who, twenty-three or twenty-four years ago, explored this very region, and who had still many unpublished documents on the subject.

GENERAL MONTEITH, F.R.G.S., observed that the name of Dagistán (simply, Country of Mountains) would be applied by the inhabitants of the low country to any part of the Caucasus; from which, he presumed, has arisen the mistake on the map of the locality of the Lesghi, whose country is particularly mentioned as Dagistán, is bounded on the west by the Aksi River, extending to the Caspian on the east, to the north nearly to the Terik, and the south the frontier of Georgia, Kakhelia. Half-way between Derbend and Kislar is situated the town of Terki, formerly the capital of the Shum Khal or Chul, the great Lesghian confederation. The four great divisions are the Kasi Kumaks, Kafer Kumaks (so called before their conversion to Mahomedanism), Avars, and Ah Kourchey (white Falcons). All the Lesghi are comprised in these four tribes, though many mixed clans exist. There is considerable difference

in the language, but generally they understand the Avar dialect. Their government is purely democratic, and the chiefs properly are elective. The arms made in Dagistán are of a very superior quality; excellent rifles are manufactured, and exported to both Turkey and Persia. Their country is highly cultivated; very good cloth is made, and their cloaks, or yapoonchas, are in general use in the neighbouring states of Persia, Georgia, and Turkey. Their schools furnish mullahs to the Caucasus generally. The place marked in the map as Dagistán is chiefly inhabited by the Chilchens, Kists, and other tribes of a distinct race. The troops of Dagistán are almost entirely infantry. Their cavalry are inferior, and the only good horse are from the Tartar tribes of Yaksi and Yamout.

The Circassians differ entirely from the Lesghi. Their dress, habits, government, and language, have nothing in common. The Circassians are a feudal people, with three classes of nobility, who serve generally as cavalry, which are of the best quality. From this people the best Mamelukes were drawn, and they were the great slave-dealers of this country. Some slaves of the Circassians, at a very early period, submitted to Russia, and served in their army. The Circassians became Mahomedans in the middle of the last century.

Tenth Meeting, April 23rd, 1860.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, VICE-PRESIDENT, in the Chair.

PRESENTATIONS.—*Consul H. S. Freeman; the Rev. T. W. Prickett; H. W. Peek; and W. Smith, C.E., Esqrs., were presented upon their election.*

ELECTIONS.—*Major-General Randall Rumley, Vice-President of the Council of Military Education; Andrew Arcedeckne; Francis Black; James T. Mackenzie; Richard Biddulph Martin; Thomas Michell; Harry Norris (Colonial Office); Hodgson Pratt; Robert Rintoul; Benjamin Coulson Robinson; and Alfred Sartoris, Esqrs., were elected Fellows.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS.—It was announced that a communication had been received from Sir G. F. Bowen, F.R.G.S., Governor of Queensland, stating that he had appointed Mr. Augustus C. Gregory (Gold Medallist, R.G.S.) as Surveyor-General of Crown Lands for that colony. It was also announced that the Admiralty had granted, in accordance with the request of the Council, to Captains Speke and Grant a free passage to the Cape, *en route* to Zanzibar, in H.M.S. *Forre*, which would likewise convey his Excellency Sir G. Grey, F.R.G.S., and Admiral Sir H. Keppel to that station.

EXHIBITIONS.—A series of beautifully executed sketches in Texas and Mexico by the Abbé Domenech, six years a resident in those countries, and some maps of the Swedish Government survey, were exhibited.